



Before and After

By Rosellen Brown

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Beautifully written, compassionate and wise, Rosellen Brown's novel is the extraordinary story of a family's struggle to survive the throes of a tragedy. *Before and After* centers on Carolyn and Ben Reiser and their two children, Judith and Jacob, who live comfortably in a small New England town. When the chief of police comes looking for seventeen-year-old Jacob to question him about the bludgeoning to death of his girlfriend, the Reisers' lives are changed forever. *Before and After* is the compelling drama of the search for Jacob, his capture, and the chain of events set in motion by a brutal crime of passion. It is a story that pits parent against parent, brother against sister, family against community, blood loyalty against the law. With a flawless ear for dialogue and profound understanding of character and motive, Rosellen Brown has written a heart-wrenching novel that questions the very nature of violence in our society and our ability to ever really know our children.

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Before and After By Rosellen Brown Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In what is arguably her best novel to date, Brown raises challenging issues in a dramatic and provocative context. Her questions--How well can parents know their children? How far should they go to protect them?--are framed in a powerful narrative that weds the suspense of a psychological thriller to a novel of character. As in her previous work (*Civil Wars* ; *Tender Mercies* ; etc.), she demonstrates remarkable insight into human relationships and scrutinizes ethical principles in crisis situations. The initial chapters of this story of one family trapped in a nightmarish situation are riveting. In the hospital of her small New Hampshire town, pediatrician Carolyn Reiser views the viciously smashed skull of teenager Martha Taverner, who had been a classmate of her son Jacob. Carolyn and her sculptor husband Ben soon discover that Jacob--mysteriously missing--was the girl's lover and is the prime suspect in her murder. Brown captures the Reisers' shock and disorientation as they confront the unthinkable, and makes credible Ben's instant decision to destroy the incriminating evidence--a blood-covered jack that he finds in the trunk of Jacob's car. As the family disintegrates during the course of Jacob's arrest and trial, the moral conflict that develops between Carolyn and Ben, though an inevitable outcome of their personalities and principles, is played out in a way that strains credulity somewhat. Yet readers will remain immersed in Brown's gripping story, mesmerized by the questions she raises and by the brave, intelligent, compassionate manner in which she deals with which she grapples with them. (Sept.) .

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From Library Journal

This fascinating novel, by the author of such critically acclaimed works as *Tender Mercies* (LJ 11/15/78. o.p.) and *Civil Wars* (LJ 4/15/84), concerns a family's struggle to hold itself together after a teenaged son murders his girlfriend. The story is told alternately from the viewpoint of the boy's mother, father, and sister. The story moves from initial shock and denial (our son could never have done this!) through anxiety over his disappearance and the difficulties of his capture and incarceration to the murder trial itself and finally to life "afterwards," when the family has had to relocate to another part of the country to avoid cruel gossip in the small New Hampshire town where these events took place. The family members are not only at odds with the community but frequently at odds with one another as well. Deep questions of loyalty, honesty, and love are forced to the surface in this psychologically riveting tale.

- *Jessica Grim, Oberlin Coll. Lib., Ohio*

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From Kirkus Reviews

Brown, as she showed in *Civil Wars* (1985), is particularly drawn to what happens to families when a wheel comes off, when the domestic unit begins to careen and veer and ultimately crash. Here, this is her theme again, and once more she accomplishes its dreadful focus with remarkable emotional nuance and high-quality flexible prose. The Reisers, Ben and Carolyn, have two children, Jacob and Judith. Carolyn is a pediatrician, Ben a sculptor, the kids normal enough for their teen and preteen ages. They are Jews among gentile New Hampshire-ites, but are accepted and like where they live, chose it. And then the son's girlfriend is killed. And it is the son who has killed her, in a rage, then has disappeared. It is as terrible a thing for the parents as actually having Jacob be the one killed. How to know one's kid? Ben's reaction is to hide evidence, then (when Jacob is found) to hide the boy, the truth, anything: he even refuses to testify to the grand jury and eventually goes to jail for it. Carolyn--along with daughter Judith--is ripped open not only by the shame and horror but by the lying; and ultimately she finds herself in a cruel grip of conscience she can't deny--even when it means she must deny her son. The plight here--`the forfeit of ordinary life"--is so raw

and impossible to finesse that half the time you're almost wincing with the pain that Brown so delicately and dramatically gives shades to. The book is occasionally boggy, stuck in the starkness of its unadorned architecture, with no way to move ahead, to put its agony to momentary rest. And Ben's and Carolyn's and Judith's eloquence of thought sometimes seems too good to be true. Yet true it ultimately all feels--and this is thanks to the tactile, nervy writing Brown accomplishes throughout. A remarkable, nightmarish, often shattering novel. -- *Copyright ©1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lisa Potter:

What do you with regards to book? It is not important with you? Or just adding material when you want something to explain what yours problem? How about your spare time? Or are you busy particular person? If you don't have spare time to perform others business, it is make you feel bored faster. And you have time? What did you do? Everybody has many questions above. They need to answer that question mainly because just their can do that. It said that about book. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is correct. Because start from on kindergarten until university need this particular Before and After to read.

Martin Duval:

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Charles Adams:

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